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Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 566
INFO USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0372

FOR ASST SECY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UY
SUBJ: CURRENT URUGUAYAN PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 010605

1. SUMMARY: URUGUAYANS LOOK AT US FROM A CONSER-
VATIVE AND VIRULENTLY ANTI-COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE.
WHILE THEY ADMIRE OUR STRENGTHS, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC,
MILITARY AND MORAL, THEY QUESTION OUR WILL TO MEET
WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE OUR GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES
AS LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD. THEIR REACTION, EX-
TREMELY CRITICAL IN SOME QUARTERS, IS BASED MORE
ON A FEELING OF DISAPPOINTMENT AT BEING LET DOWN BY
A TRADITIONAL FRIEND THAN ON ANY ANIMOSITY. THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT HAS NOT CAUSED A LESSENING OF
URUGUAYAN SUPPORT FOR MOST U.S. POSITIONS IN FORA
SUCH AS THE UN AND THE OAS BUT, WE BELIEVE, HAS
PERSUADED THEM OUT OF A SENSE OF PRAGMATISM AS
WELL, TO SEEK CLOSER RELATIONS WITH LIKE-MINDED
STATES OF THE AREA. IDEOLOGICALLY, CULTURALLY, AND
IN MOST OTHER SENSES, URUGUAY IDENTIFIES WITH THE
UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, THE GOU IS COMING TO BE-
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LIEVE THATITS NATIONAL INTERESTS MAY BEST BE SERVED
BY BELONGING TO THE (LATIN AMERICAN) CLUB EVEN

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THOUGH IT IS NOT ONE OF THE BOYS AT HEART. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ANY DISCUSSION OF URUGUAYAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES, IT GOES ALMOST WITHOUT SAYING THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH A VERY CONSERVATIVE, ANTI-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT WHICH RADICALLY CHANGED COURSE PARTLY BECAUSE THE PRIOR ADMINISTRATION WAS UNABLE TO DEAL SATISFACTORIALY WITH AN EXTERNALLY SUPPORTED COMMUNIST AND THEN TERRORIST THREAT TO THE NATION'S INSTITUTIONS.ATTITUDES OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF URUGUAY (AND OF THE POPULACE) ARE MOST LIKELY AFFECTED MORE BY A WELL-REMEMBERED HANGOVERFROM PRE-1973 EVENTS IN URUGUAY THAN BY RECENT WORLD EVENTS. SINCE URUGUAYANS IN GENERAL ARENOT IN THE LEAST BIT RETICENT ABOUT GIVING THEIR OPINIONS ON THE UNITED STATES AND ITS INSTITUTIONS AND PEOPLE, IT IS NOT TOO DIFFICULT TO GAUGE URUGUAYAN ATTITUDES REGARDING THE U.S.

3. GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMENT GENERALLY INDICATE CONTINUED FAITH IN THE UNITED STATES AS A NATION WITH BASIC STRENGTHS WHICH HASNOT BEEN MORTALLY WOUNDED BY THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR, WATERGATE, ETC. URUGUAY'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WAS BASED ON OUR OWN, AND MOST URUGUAYANS REALLY WANT OUR SYSTEM TO CONTINUE TO PROSPER AND TO BE AN EXAMPLE OF DEMOCRACY. THE BAD TIMES WE ARE HAVING NOW ARE SEEN BY MANY AS EVIDENCE THT THE U.S. 8 STRONG ENOUGH TO ABSORB TREMENDOUS SHOCKS WITHOUT SUFFERING IRREPARABLE DAMAGE.

4. VIETNAM WAS A BAD BLOW T OUR IMAGE HERE OF A SUPER POWER WHICH COULD TAKE ON THE BAD GUYS EVERY-WHERE AND WIN. NEVERTHELESS, URUGUAYAN S STILL SEE THE U.S. AS BEING THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD MILITARILY AND ECONOMICALLY. THEY DO NOT DOUBT OUR STRENGTH BUT HAVE INCREASINGLY GRAVE DOUBTS AS TO OUR WILL WHICH, THEY BELIEVE, IN PART IS SAPPED BY SUBTLE FORMS OF SUBVERSION. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT THE WAVE OF SELF-CRITICIMS OR SELF-QUESTINGING IN THE

U.S. PREVENTS THE U.S. FROM EITHER ACTING AS A WORLD LEADER OR INSPIRING OTHER COUNTRIES TO HAVE THE NECESSARY FAITH TO FOLLOW ITS LEAD. WILE THE SOVIETS, FOR EXAMPLE, APPEAR TO HAVE CLEARLY DEFINED GOALS TO-WARDS WHICH THEIR ACTIONS ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE GEARED, URUGUAYANS SEE AMERICANS AS ASKING THEMSELVES NOT ONLY WHERE THEY ARE GOING GLOBALLY BUT WHETHER THEY OUGHT TO BE PLAYING THE ROLE OF A GLOBAL POWER. THE SELF-CRITICISM MIGHT TO A POINT HAVE BEEN REGARDED AS HEALTHY REASSESSMENT THORUGH WHICH A DEMOCRATIC

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SOCIETY ADJUSTS TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, DOMESTIC AND
FOREIGN. HOWEVER, THE ETHICAL APPROCH HAS BEEN
CARRIED SO FAR AS TO THREATEN VITAL NATIONAL INTERESTS,
AND U.S. RESPNSIBILITIES AS A FREE WORLD LEADER.
FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE IT MAY, STRICTLY SPEAKING, BE
UNETHICAL FOR A STATE TO HAVE A SECRET SERVICE OPERATING
CLANDESTINELY IN OTHERSTATES, URUGUAYANS KNOW REALISTICALLY
THAT VIRTUALLY ALL STATES HAVE THEM IN ONE FORM OR
ANOTHER. TEREFORE, FOR THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED
STATES TO INVESTIGAE THE CENTRAL INTELLIENCE AGENCY
AND THEN TO PUBLISH ITS FINDINGS SEEMS TO MANY HERE
TO BE ABSURD WHEN VEIWED FROM A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE.

5. URUGUAYANS BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. PAYS TOO MUCH
ATTENTION TO THE OPINIONS OF OTHER COUNTRIES RATHER
THAN ACTING IN ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS. WHAT IS
ACCEPTED IN THE U.S. AS PUBLIC OPINION TOO OFTEN
REFLECTS THE VOCIFEROUS FEW RATHER THAN THE MASSES. A SMALL
COMMUNIST PARTY, WELL ORGANIZED, CAN MOUNT A WALL-PAINTING
CAMPAIGN, LEAD A FLAG-BURNING OR ROCK-THROWING DEMON-
STRATION IN FRONT OF A U.S. EMBASSY, HAVE THEM PLAYED UP
ON TELEVISION AND IN THE WORLD'S LEFTIST PRESS AS
EXPRESSION OF "POPULAR WILL;" AND THE U.S. REACTS
TO THIS INSPIRED "MEDIA IMAGE" OR "CREATED EVENT".
THE LEFTISTS IN AMERICA PLAY THE THEME WHILE THE
RIGHTISTS REACT WITH INDIGNATION AGAINST THE COUNTRY
INVOLED, NOT AGAINST THE SMALL GROUP REPRESENTED BY
THE PARTY WHICH PROBABLY OPPOSES THE GOVERNMENT I
POWER ANYWAY.

6 SELF-CRITICISM AND OUR HYPERSENSITIVITY TO OPINION
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DETER US, URUGUAYSN BELIEVE, FROMPROTECTING OUR
INTERESTS IN OTHER WAYS, AS WELL. EVERYONE IS AGAINST
INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER STATES.
YET, WHEN ONE FACES AN ENEMY WHO ISPREPARED AND ABLE
TO INTEVENT, HE, TOO MUST BE PREPARED TO INTERVENE. THE
LATEST SPECIFIC EXAMPLE CAME UP IN RELATION TO COMMUNIST
SUPPORT FOR THE MPLA IN ANGOLA. A SENIOR OFFICER OF
THE URUGUAYAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, ONE ADAMANTLY OPPOSED
TO INTERVENTION IN PRINCIPLE, ASKED WHAT THE U.S. WAS
GOING TO DO TO PREVENT THE MPLA FROM TAKING OVER ANGOLA.
WHEN TOLD THE U.S. WAS TAKING DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES IN
AN ATTEMPT TO ENSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA AND THE
SELF-DTERMINATION OF ITS PEOPLE BUT THAT THE U.S.
WOULD NOT INTERVENE, THE MAN ASKED, IN EFFECT, IF THE
U.S. WERE CONTENT TO STAND BY AND LET WORLD COMMUNISM
TAKE CONTROL OF STILL ANOTHER STATE. HE, AND OTHER
URUGUAYSN BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. MUST ACT IN ITS INTEREST
AND THAT, IN MOST CASES, THESE ACTIONS WILL BE IN THE

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INTERESTS OF THE FREE WORLD AS WELL. THERE HAS
BEEN A DEFINITE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT WHICH PROBABLY
WILL HAVE A FOREIGN POLICY EFFECT AS WELL (SEE 8 BELOW).

7 THE URUGUAYANS KNOW ALL TOO WELL OURPOLITICAL
PROCESSES AND HOW CONGRESS ACTS. THERE IS SOME FEELING
HERE THAT OUR CONGRESS SHOWS SOME SIMILARTIY TO THEIR
OWN EX-CONGRESS WHICH THEY NOW SEE AS HAVING IN MANY
WAYS BEENCORRUPT, USELESS, AND DOWNRIGHT DANGEROUS.
OUR EXECUTIVE IS HELD IN MUCH HIGHER ESTEEM AND THERE
IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE GOU FEELS IT IS

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0372

FOR ASST SECY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

INSINCERE. NEVERTHELESS, URUGUAYANS HAVE SOME REAL
FEARS CONCERNING SOME ACTIONS OF CONGRESS. THE GOU
DOES BELIEVE THAT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRA-
TION AND CONGRESS LIMIT THE ABILITY OF THE U.S. TO
FOLLOW THROUGH ON ITS COMMITMENTS. TO DATE, HOWEVER,
THIS HAS NOT AFFECTED URUGUAY'S READINESS TO COOPERATE
WITH THE U.S., THE LATEST SIGNIFICANT EXAMPLE BEING
FONMIN BLANCO'S OFFER TO AMBASSADOR MAILLIARD TO HELP
WITH OAS REFORM. WITH RESPECT TO DEPENDENCE, URUUAY
ACTUALLY "DEPENDS" VERY LITTLE ON THE U.S. IT WOULD
PRIVATELY ADMIT DEPENDENCE ON U.S. VOTES IN MULTILATERAL
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR ITS ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND

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THAT'S ALL. AND THIS WOULD BE AN ACCURATE APPRAISAL.

8. NOTWITHSTANDING RECENTLY GENERATED DOUBTS, FUNDA-
MENTAL, LONG STANDING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE U.S. (AS A
GREAT DEMOCRACY, A BULWARK OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION,
ETC) HAVE NOT BEEN OVERLY ERODED. ON JAN 16,
EL PAIS, IN A BICENTTNNIAL EDITORIAL (SEE EMBASSY'S
A-005), STATED, "THE UNITED STATES, THEN HAS ASSIMLATED
ITS BLOWS AND EMERGED IN THE ESTIMATION OF THE WORLD
AS A UNIQUE COUNTRY, PROFOUNDLY RSPECTFUL OF INDIVIDUAL
RIGHTS, AN UNCONDITIONAL LOVER OF THE CONCEPTS OF
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LIBERTY AND DIVERSE INBOTH ITS VICES AND VIRUTES."
HOWEVER, URUGUAYNS, WHO HAVE MOVED TO THE RIGHT, I
PART AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR TERRORIST EXPERIENCES,
CONSTANTLY ASK RHETORICALLY WHETHER THE U.S. IS
ABANDONING ITS FRIENDS AND SIDING WITH THE COMMUNISTS.
THEY QUESTION THE WISDOM OF A DETENTE (SEE BLANCOS
UNGA ADDRESS AS AN EXAMPLE) WHICH PROVIDES NOTHING TO
THE SMALL CUNTRIES WHICH ARE THREATENED BY FOREIGN-
SUPPORTED SUBVERSION, NOT BY NUCLEAR DEVASTATION. THEY
CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY WE CRITICIZE THEM ON WHAT THEY
CONSIDER FEW AND WELL-JUSTIFIED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
WHILE WE EITHER REMAIN SILENT WITH RESPECT TO MASSIVE
VIOLATONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA, CUBA AND OTHER
COMMUNIST REGIMES NOR CAN THEY UNDERSTAND WHY WE ARE
WILLING TO BAIL OUT THE SOVIET UNION, ANOTHER GROSS
VIOLATOR OFHUMAN RIGHTS, WITH FOOD GRAINS AND TECHNOLOGY
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THREATENING TO CUT OFF THE LITTLE
ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO COUNTRIES SUCH AS URUGUAY. YES,
THIS WILL IMPACT ON URUGUAY'S FOREIGN POLICY (SEE 12
BELOW). IT MAY NOT GREATLY ALTER TIES WITH THE U.S.
EXCEPT AS NOTED IN 10 AND 12 BELOW.

9. CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA AND OUR REACTION TO
IT HASPRODUCED THE ATTITUDES MENTIONED IN 6 ABOVE.
ADDITIONALLY, URUGUAYANS ARE CONVINCED MOE THAN
VER OF THE RIGHTNESS OF THEIR STRUGGLE TO PREVENT
THE LIFTING OF OAS SANCTIONS LAST YEAR. THE "WE
TOLD YOUSO ATTITUDE" IS EXTREMELY STRONG. THEY
HAVE ARGUED CONSISTENTLY THAT CUBA CONTINUES TO IN-
TERVENT AND NOW FEEL VINDICATED BY EVENTS IN ANGOLA.
SENIOR GOU PEOPLE UNDERSTAND, ON INTELLECUTAL GROUNDS,
THE POSITION WE TOOK IN SAN JOSE LAST YEAR. EMOTIONALLY,
HOWEVER, IT WAS SOMETHING THEY CANNOT FORGET. THIS
ATTITUDE ALSO TIES IN WITH NON-OFFICIAL OPINION WHICH
SEES ANGOLA AS PROOF OUR OVERALLVACILLATIOM A
RECENT COLUMN IN EL PAIS, THE NATION'S LEADING DAILY,
WAS TITLED "USSR ACTS; USA VACILLATES." IT DETAILED

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SOVIET ACTIONS ON THE ONE SIDE AND ASKED RHETORICALLY
WHAT WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE, CONCLUDING,"A VACILLATING
UNITED STATES, BRAKED BY A SENATE WHICH IMPEDES HELP
TO PRO-WESTERN ANGOLAN FORCES AND WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF
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WITH THE CIA AS IF THIS WERE ITS REAL ENEMY."

10. WE BELIVE THAT URUGUAYANS WOULD LIKE TO DEAL WITH
US ON A BILATERAL BASIS BUT REALIZE THAT THEY DO NOT
HAVETHE POWER TO DO SO. CONSEQUENTLY, THEY WOULD
PREFER WHAT THEY CONSIDER THE NEXT BEST THING, A
DEPENDABLE U.S. POLICY FRAMEWORK WHICH WOULD PRO-
VICE RELATIVELY STABLE PARAMETERS WITHIN WHICH
THEY COULD WORK. UNFORTUNATELY, THEYSEEM TO FEEL
THAT THE U.S. ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH LATIN AMERICA
AND SEARCHES CONSTANTLY FOR ALATIN AMERICAN POLICY
AS IF THERE WERE A LATIN AMERICA. URUGUAY ANDITS
SOUTHERN CONE NEIGHBORS FEEL MORE AFFINITY TOWARDS
THE U.S. THAN TOWARDS AN ALTIPLANO INDIAN COUNTRY
SUCH AS BOLIVIA OR THE CARIBEAN BLACK AND INDIAN
COUNTRIES.IF THE U.S. WERE TO HAVE A URUGUAYAN
POLICY OR EVEN A SOUTHERN CONE POLICY, THESE COUNTRIES
WOULD IDENTIFY WITH THE U.S. RATHER THAN WITH OTHER
HEMISPHERIC COUNTRIES. THE LATIN COUNTRIES ARE ACTING
AS A BLOC FOR SOLID REASONS. FIRST, THEY NEED LARGER
INTERNAL MARKETS AND MUST INTEGRATE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN
THEM. THE U.S. COULD OFFSET THIS QUICKLY IF IT WERE
TO OPEN ITS MARKETS. THE SIGNING OF THE GSP WAS A VERY
POSITIVE STEP IN THAT DIRECTION. SECOND, SINCE THE
U.S. HAS NO POLICIES GEARED TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES
OR EVEN AREAS, SUCH AS THE SOUTHERN CONE, THE NATIONAL
INTERESTS OF EACH COUNTRY ARE BETTER SERVED BY JOINING
A LATIN AMERICAN BLOC IN ORDER TO JOINTLY PRESSURE THE
U.S. THIS, TOO, COULD BE OFFSET QUICKLY IF THE U.S.
WERE WILLING TO DEVELOP A COHERENT POLICH TOWARDS
INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR SUB-AREAS AND PAY SOME ATTENTION
TO THEIR NEEDS. IDEALOGICALLY, CULTURALLY, AND IN MOST
OTHER SENSES, URUGUAY IDENTIFIES WITH THE U.S.THIS IS
APPARENT IN ITS ACTIONS IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND ELSEWHERE.
HOWEVER, URUGUAY'S NATIONAL INTERESTS WILL BEST BE
SERVED BY BELONGING TO THE (LATIN AMERICAN) CLUB EVEN THOUGH
IT'S NOT ONE OF THE BOYS AT HEART).

1. CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. DO NOT SEEM TO
BE INFLUENCING THE GOU'S VOTING POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL
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12. URUGUAY MAY BE TURNING ELSEWHERE TO REPLACE ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THE U.S. DURNG THE PAST YEAR IT HAS GREATLY STEPPED UP PRESIDENTIAL AND OTHER HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, CHILE, PARAGUAY AND SOUTH AFRICA. WHILE THE THRUST OF GOU POLICY IN THE AREA HAS BEEN TO CREATE A REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE (TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS, TRADE,CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS, SOCIAL SECURITY, ETC.) WHICH WILL MAKE NATIONS IN THE REGION INCREASINGLY INTERDEPENDENT, WE BELIEVE IT ALSO HAS SIGNIFIED CLOSER POLITICAL VIEW. PHILOSOPHICALLY, URUGUAY LONG IDENTIFIED WITH THE U.S. BUT PURE PRAGMATISM MAY BE FORCING IT TO IDENTIFY INTERNATIONALLY WITH NEIGHBORS UNDER SIMILAR ATTACKS FROM ABROAD - FROM THE LEFT GENERALLY AND FROM THE U.S. AND OTHERS ON HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS. THEIR RATIONALE BEING ONE OF LOOKING TO OTHER RIGHTIST GOVERNMENTS AS THE U.S. TURNS SOFT ON COMMUNISM OR BECOMES AN UNRELIABLE ALLY. GIVEN URUGUAY'S LACK OF U.S. INVESTMENT OR RAW MATERIALS CRITICAL TO THE U.S., THE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THE U.S. OF SUCH A SHIFT WOULD NOT BE SIGNIFICANT.
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